DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 131 SP 023 107

AUTHOR	Scaros, Barbara C.
TITLE	Sight on Sites: An Approach to Coping with Teacher Stress--Preventing Burn-out.
INSTITUTION	New York City Teacher Centers Consortium, NY.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	81
NOTE	21p.
AVAILABLE FROM	New York City Teacher Centers Consortium, 260 Park Avenue, South, New York, NY 10010 ($1.00).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Coping; Elementary Secondary Education; Expectation; Inservice Teacher Education; *Prevention; Self Concept; Self Evaluation (Individuals); Social Support Groups; *Stress Management; *Stress Variables; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Burnout; Time Management
IDENTIFIERS	*Teacher Stress

ABSTRACT

This booklet, one of a series prepared by the New York City teacher specialists at Teacher Center Sites, describes a strategy for helping teachers to understand and deal with the sources of stress. The emphasis of this strategy is on identifying sources of stress, and organizing ways of effectively managing and preventing stress by increasing self-awareness and creating peer support. Contents of the publication include: (1) a definition of stress and personal checklist; (2) a description of teacher burn-out, the stages leading to it, and intervention strategies; (3) a stress inventory; (4) tips on time management; and (5) a description of the peer support/challenge process, a challenge sheet, and a bibliography. (JMK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED236131

SIGHT ON SITES

Booklets Prepared By New York City Teacher Specialists At Teacher Center Sites

AN APPROACH TO COPING WITH TEACHER STRESS– PREVENTING BURN-OUT

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Maria Cooper

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

BARBARA C. SCAROS

SPRINGFIELD GARDENS HIGH SCHOOL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

New York City
Teacher Centers Consortium
260 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10010
212-475-3737

SP023 107

United Federation of Teachers | New York City Board of Education | Institutions of Higher Education

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barbara Scaros is currently the High School Teacher Center Specialist for the New York City Teacher Centers Consortium. She has been a high school teacher in New York City for 12 years, teaching in both traditional and alternative schools. Since working with the Teacher Center project, she has developed and presented workshops and materials on stress prevention, time management, and moral reasoning and development. She is presently working on a number of projects including further material on teacher stress.

"The contents of this publication were developed with financial assistance from the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the position or policy of that agency and a reader should not infer endorsement by the Federal Government."

The New York City Teacher Centers Consortium does not promote or profit from the sale of any commercial products that may be associated with the material or program described herein.

FOREWORD

The New York City Teacher Centers Consortium is pleased to present a publication dealing with timely concerns of teachers. These materials are being disseminated in response to the expressed needs of teachers who wish to understand and enrich their professional lives.

This publication describes a strategy for helping teachers to understand and deal with the sources of stress. The emphasis of this strategy is on identifying sources of stress, and organizing ways of effectively managing and preventing stress by increasing self-awareness and creating peer support.

We recognize that this approach is one of many that can be adapted for use in coping with teacher stress. We therefore encourage teachers to look beyond these materials and select the approach that best serves their own and their students' individual needs.

Myrna Cooper, *Director*
New York City Teacher Centers Consortium

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
QUICK CHECK ON STRESS	2
BURN-OUT	4
STAGES LEADING TO BURN-OUT	5
INTERVENTION	6
STRESS INVENTORY	7
STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES	8
TIME MANAGEMENT	9
TEN TIPS ON TIME MANAGEMENT	11
PEER SUPPORT/CHALLENGE PROCESS	12
CHALLENGE SHEET	13
COPING WITH STRESS: SOME FINAL THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER	14
BIBLIOGRAPHY	15

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CAROLYN HARRISON

IRIS IMBERMAN

Typists

JOHN K. WALTON

Publications Coordinator

INTRODUCTION

What is stress? Dr. Hans Selye in his book, Stress Without Distress, has defined stress as "a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it." Stress may have a detrimental effect on our physical and mental health, impair our ability to be effective teachers, and diminish the satisfaction that we receive from our work.

However, a certain amount of stress is inevitable and not always bad. We need to find our optimal stress level. Too little stress may produce boredom and stagnation, but too much stress can cause "distress".

Distress occurs when the environmental demands exceed the resources of the person to handle them.

Distress has a number of possible causes:

- Poor quality relationships with students, colleagues, and/or administrators. This includes poor communication and a lack of mutual respect. Also, it is not uncommon to feel overwhelmed by too many interpersonal interactions in too short a time.
- A sense of powerlessness. It is particularly stressful to feel responsibility for whatever occurs, but perceive that you have little control over the outcome.
- Role conflict. Sometimes we feel pulled in different directions by the expectations of the community, students, administrators, and our personal philosophy of education.
- Life changes external to the work situation. For example, events such as the death of a loved one, divorce, moving, etc., may diminish the energy and emotional strength that we bring to our work.
- Life stages. Adults continue to experience predictable life stages (passages) that decrease our capacity to deal with the emotional demands of teaching.
- Internal sources of stress. Our ideas, expectations, and attitudes may cause us to experience stress in a situation that is not stressful to others.

- Institutional practices and policies that foster competition and evaluation, and create situations that are likely to be stressful.
- A loss of purpose or meaning in life.
- Time management problems. A feeling of constant time pressures and constraints.

Here are a few symptoms of distress:

Fatigue
Irritability
Hostility
Apathy
Depression
Anxiety
Overeating
Rapid speech
Inability to concentrate
Headaches
Insomnia
Upper respiratory infections
Cardiovascular problems
Sense of powerlessness and hopelessness
Lower back pain
Lack of interest in, or problems with sex
Being accident-prone
Aggression

QUICK CHECK ON STRESS

Answer the following questions based on how you feel right now.

Yes	No	
☐	☐	1. Did you have a good night's sleep last night?
☐	☐	2. Did you have a good breakfast?
☐	☐	3. Did you get to work with no problems?
☐	☐	4. Do you usually have enough time to do all you need to in a day?
☐	☐	5. Do you always leave your weekends free of school-related work?
☐	☐	6. Do you schedule time for yourself on a regular basis?
☐	☐	7. Do you exercise 3 x's a week in a regular basis?
☐	☐	8. Do you weigh within 5 pounds of your ideal weight?
☐	☐	9. Do you know a teacher who is not under stress?
☐	☐	10. Do you know an administrator who is not under stress?

If you have more checks in the No column than in the Yes column, you are probably experiencing some stress.

BURN-OUT

Burn-Out is the progressive loss of idealism, energy and purpose which results from too much distress.

There are four stages leading to burn-out:

- Stage One - Enthusiasm
  At this stage we experience high hopes, high energy and enthusiasm about our jobs. Often in our enthusiasm we set unrealistic goals.

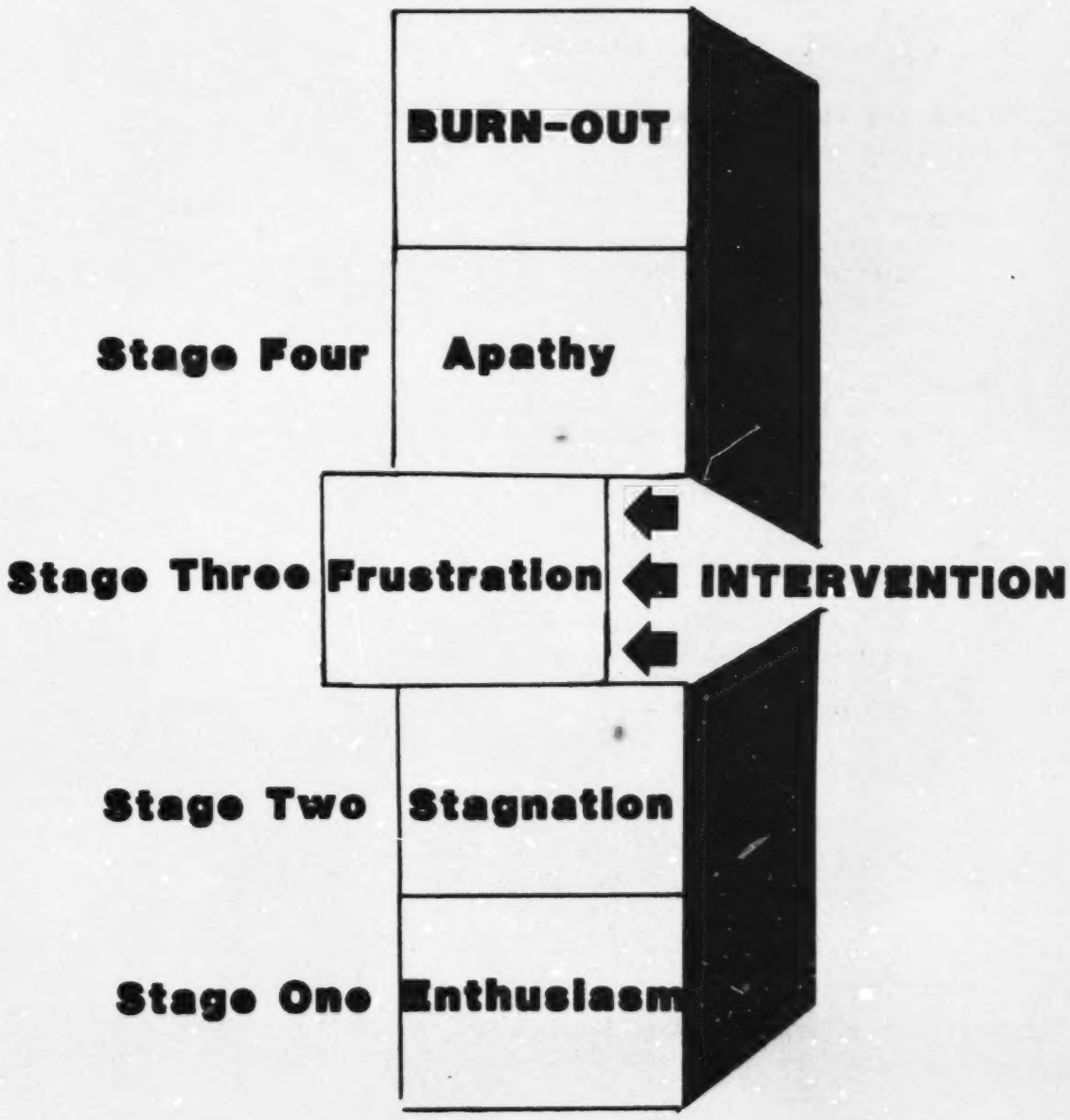
- Stage Two - Stagnation
  Here, the job has become less exciting. We are still involved, but begin to seek enjoyment and fulfillment from sources other than the job.

- Stage Three - Frustration
  At stage three, symptoms of distress begin to emerge. We begin to question our effectiveness and the value of the job itself.
  Here are some frustrations & stresses which can lead to burn-out:

  Not enough money
  Too many hours
  Career dead-end
  Too much paper work
  Not appreciated by students
  Not appreciated by supervisors
  No support
  Powerlessness

- Stage Four - Apathy
  If no intervention occurs, we reach this level as a defense against frustration. A job is a job is a job. Punch in. Punch out. What's the use?

STAGES LEADING TO BURN-OUT



INTERVENTION

Intervention breaks the build-up at any point.

If you care enough to be disappointed, you are not burned-out!

Our purpose is to turn this energy around. However, in order to do this, you have to be willing to give up some things, like:

- The red pencil mentality - looking for what is wrong with a plan or situation rather than identifying its strengths and positive qualities.
- The bitching syndrome - sometimes it's more satisfying to complain about something than to change it.
- The yes but . . . mentality - a way of resisting change which also reduces the likelihood of people helping you.

You also have to be willing to accept some things:

- Reality - Some things are the way they are. That's it. Can you live with it?
- Responsibility - Sometimes the only thing which can be changed is you. Will you do it?
- Peer Support - The energy you use to complain can be turned around for help and support of the group. Will you use it?

STRESS INVENTORY

Before you can truly begin to cope with stress, you must first focus on those situations which are stressful for you. This stress inventory will enable you to look closely at these situations, who is involved in them, and how much control you have over them.

Fill in the inventory using the key at the bottom and then look over and answer the questions at end.

STRESS SITUATION	WHO	OCCURS	CONTROL	DEAL WITH IT

Key

Who is involved?	How Frequently Does It Occur?	Degree of Control You Have Over The Situation	How Do You Deal With It?
A = Administrators	A = Always	HC = High level of control	N = No Action
P = Parents	O = Often	SC = Some control	H = Used humor
M = Me (alone)	S = Seldom	NC = No control	S = Support from others
S = Students			D = Depressed
T = Teacher			O = Other (describe)
O = Other (specify)			
F = Family			

I learned from this inventory that _____

_____

I was surprised that _____

_____

STRENGTHS and SUCCESSES

One way to overcome sources of stress and frustration on the job is to focus on the positive things we do.

SUCCESSES

In the spaces provided below, list the successes you have had on your job or in your personal life in the past week.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

STRENGTHS

In the spaces provided below, list the strengths you have of which you are most proud.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Procedure:

1. Form a group of 3-4 peers.
2. Decide who will go first.
3. Read list of successes.
4. The group then:
   - . validates and/or agrees
   - . adds to list.
5. Do the same thing with strengths.
6. Share the positive feelings with each other.

TIME MANAGEMENT

"Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have. Use it wisely. Be careful about other people spending it for you."

-Carl Sandburg-

Each of us begins the day with the same number of hours for our use. The way in which that time is spent is a matter of choice. Because of time limitations, it is not possible for most people to accomplish everything they would like to do. "I don't have the time" is really a statement of priorities. Most of us go through life giving little conscious thought to our use of time and how its use is contributing to the attainment of our long-term goals. Basically, the control and management of time begins with planning.

The following goal setting exercise may help you to prioritize what things you really want out of life.

Life Time Goals

List the goals you would like to achieve during your lifetime.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Three Years Goals

List the goals you would like to achieve within the next three years.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Six Month Goals

If you were to be struck by lightning six months from now, what goals would you like to have achieved by then?

_____

_____

_____

_____

My Most Important Lifetime Goals

Look over all three lists and from them, select the three most important goals and list them below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Look over this last list. What are you doing to achieve these goals? What actions would you be willing to take in the next week to move you towards accomplishing these lifetime goals? Note them down in the spaces below.

Next Week I Can...

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

TEN TIPS ON TIME MANAGEMENT

1. Begin each day by ordering your priorities.

   List or plan what you want to accomplish and the order in which these goals need to be reached. Set achievable goals and establish realistic deadlines. Plan what you know you can do, not what you feel you should do.

2. Avoid extra work.

   Learn to say no. Don't take on extra projects if you are already overloaded.

3. Structure your time.

   Set aside, where possible, certain hours for certain tasks. Include in this, internal time for yourself to restore your energy.

4. Keep in mind that the amount of work to be done does not cause as much stress as the manner in which work is approached.

   Find the pace at which you work best and try to stay with it.

5. Keep in mind that human performance deteriorates after five hours.

   Build time into your day to take short breaks. Find something that will briefly take your mind off work and work related problems.

6. Don't expect everything to be completed at the end of every work day.

   There will always be more work to do.

7. Do one thing at a time.

   Focus on what you are doing now- otherwise your energy will be scattered and less productive.

8. Do not let other people waste your time.

   Ask yourself - What is the best use of my time right now?

9. Learn to delegate.

   Are you really the only person who can do this job? You can often share responsibilities and work loads with others - students, family members, colleagues.

10. Avoid perfectionism in yourself and in your expectations of others.

    Most likely, the only person who feels you need to be absolutely perfect is you. Remember too, that other people are not in this world to live up to your expectations.

PEER SUPPORT/CHALLENGE PROCESS

An important method of handling and preventing stress is through developing a support system. At times of stress, it is essential to discuss our difficulties with one or more individuals in whom we have confidence and trust. Discussion helps one to identify, clarify and define the problem. The following group process can be helpful in starting an on-going support system with friends or colleagues and in using others' insights to focus on those aspects of our jobs which are stressful.

1. Form a support group of 4-6 peers.
2. One person (focus person) discusses a problem (challenge) that he/she is having on the job.
3. The support group clarifies questions and then all write down the challenge.
4. The support group then brainstorms possible suggestions. The focus person records all suggestions without comments or questions.
5. In the next phase, the focus person has the opportunity to clarify any/all of the brainstormed suggestions.
6. The remainder of the time is used in helping the focus person determine a contract that is based on the suggestions elicited during the brainstorming.
7. New time for additional support is scheduled.

CHALLENGE SHEET

Date _____

CHALLENGE: _____

_____

_____

BRAINSTORMED SUGGESTIONS:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

AGREEMENT

I, _____ will _____

_____

_____

_____ by _____.

SUPPORT PERSONS: SIGNATURE _____

_____

_____

_____

COPING WITH STRESS: SOME FINAL THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

It is not what happens to us, but our perceptions, beliefs, and what we tell ourselves about things that produces distress.

Happiness cannot be achieved when pursued as a goal. It's a by-product of other activities.

Find activities in which you receive intrinsic satisfaction.

Find something other than yourself and your achievements to care about.

Learn to recognize and accept your personal shortcomings and your lack of control over much of what will ultimately happen to us.

Develop an unhostile, benevolent sense of humor.

Learn to tolerate and forgive yourself and others.

The struggles of life may change, but never end. Stop waiting for the day when "you can relax" or when "your problems will be over."

Ideas from: STRESS, SANITY, AND SURVIVAL

by: Robert Woolfolk and Frank Richardson

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Benson, Herbert. The Relaxation Response. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1975.

Edelwich, Brodsky. Burn-Out. N.Y.: Human Science Press., 1979.

Forbes, Rosalind. Corporate Stress. New York: Doubleday, 1979.

Friedman, Meyer, & Rosenman, R. Type A. Behavior and Your Heart. Breenwich., Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1974.

Furlong, William Barry. "The Flow Experience: The Fun in Fun." Psychology Today: June, 1976, pp. 35-38.

Glasser, W. Positive Addiction. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

Gunther, Bernard. Sense Relaxation Below Your Mind. New York: Pocket Books.

Lakein, Alan. How to Take Control of Your Time and Life. New York: Signet, 1973.

Rosen, Gerald M. The Relaxation Book: An Illustrated Self-Help Program. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Schafer, Walt. Stress, Distress, and Growth. Davis, Cal.: Responsible Action, 1978.

Selye, Hans. Stress Without Distress. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1974.

Sheehy, Gail. Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1976

Simon, Sidney B. Meeting Yourself Halfway: Thirty-one Values Clarification for Daily Living. Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1974.

Walker, C. Learn to Relax: 13 ways to Reduce Tension. Englewood Cliffs, N.Y.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975.

Woolfolk, R. and Richardson, F. Stress, Sanity, and Survival. New York: Monarch, 1978.

NEW YORK CITY TEACHER CENTERS CONSORTIUM POLICY BOARD As of September 1980

Sol Levine	Chairperson of Policy Board; Vice-President of Junior High Schools/Intermediate Schools, United Federation of Teachers; Teacher, J.H.S. 104
George Altomare	Vice-President of High Schools, United Federation of Teachers; Teacher, Stuyvesant H.S.
Goldie Cabrera	Teacher, P.S. 14 (Bilingual Education)
Joan Campbell	Teacher, Robert Wagner Junior High School
Lloyd Cooke	Vice-Chairperson, Economic Development Council
Barbara Dinhofer	Teacher, Robert Wagner Junior High School
Ronald Edmonds	Senior Assistant to the Chancellor for Instruction, Board of Education of the City of New York
Sandra Feldman	Assistant Secretary, United Federation of Teachers; Staff Director, UFT; Teacher
Betty Felton	Educational Director, United Parents Association
Charlotte Frank	Executive Director, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Board of Education of the City of New York
Jerry Gross	Executive Director, Division of Special Education, Board of Education of the City of New York
Chris Hammond	Teacher, P.S. 33
Sondra Juron	Teacher, P.S. 14
Flora Karbelnik	Teacher, P.S. 198
Maurice Leiter	Executive Board Member, United Federation of Teachers; Director of Program Development, UFT; Teacher
Abe Levine	Vice-President of Elementary Schools, United Federation of Teachers; Teacher
Felton Lewis	Superintendent, Community School District #16
Ronald Mace	Teacher, New Lincoln School (Nonpublic)
Anthony Mottola	Dean, Fordham University
Frank Pagliuca	Teacher, P.S. 261
Nathan Quinones	Executive Director, Division of High Schools, Board of Education of the City of New York
Randy Ratner	Teacher, P.S. 161
Arnold Reifer	Teacher, Springfield Gardens High School
Joyce Ronson	Teacher, P.S. 36
Harriet Rosenberg	Teacher, P.S. 179
Harold Rosenbloom	Teacher, Springfield Gardens High School
Simpson Sasserath	Special Assistant to the President, Council of Supervisors and Administrators
Bart Schwartz	Teacher, P.S. 398
Hugh Scott	Dean, Hunter College
Fred Smith	Teacher, P.S. 179 (Special Education)
Michael Squeglia	Teacher, Eli Whitney Vocational High School
Russell Zausmer	Teacher, P.S. 16